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0521824451 - Barbarism and Religion, Volume Three: The First Decline and Fall

J. G. A. Pocock

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## BARBARISM AND RELIGION

Volume Three

*The First Decline and Fall*

'Barbarism and Religion' – Edward Gibbon's own phrase – is the title of a sequence of works by John Pocock designed to situate Gibbon, and his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in a series of contexts in the history of eighteenth-century Europe. This is a major intervention from one of the world's leading historians, challenging the notion of any one 'Enlightenment' and positing instead a plurality of Enlightenments, of which the English was one. The first two volumes of *Barbarism and Religion* were warmly and widely reviewed, and won the Jacques Barzun Prize in Cultural History of the American Philosophical Society.

In this third volume in the sequence, *The First Decline and Fall*, John Pocock offers a historical introduction to the first fourteen chapters of Gibbon's great work. He argues that this first Decline and Fall is a phenomenon of specifically 'ancient' history in which Christianity played no part, and whose problems were those of liberty and empire. The first Decline and Fall is that of ancient, imperial and polytheist Rome, and Gibbon's first fourteen chapters recount the end of classical civilisation, a civilisation with which Gibbon and his readers were vastly more familiar than with its late-antique successor. Only towards the end of this present volume do the Christians appear, and Gibbon's history begins to move towards its dominant themes.

Born in London and brought up in Christchurch, New Zealand, J. G. A. POCOCK was educated at the Universities of Canterbury and Cambridge, and is now Harry C. Black Emeritus Professor of History at The Johns Hopkins University. His many seminal works on intellectual history include *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (1957, Second Edition 1987), *Politics, Language and Time* (1971), *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), and *Virtue, Commerce and History* (1985). He has also edited *The Political Works of James Harrington* (1977) and Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1987), as well as the collaborative study *The Varieties of British Political Thought* (1995). A Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy and of the Royal Historical Society, Professor Pocock is also a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the American Philosophical Society. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of New Zealand Merit in 2002.

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*On ne peut jamais quitter les Romains*  
Montesquieu

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## *Acknowledgements*

This volume bears no dedication like those to Franco Venturi and Arnaldo Momigliano, prefixed to *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon* and *Narratives of Civil Government*. There is no single historian with whose theses the volume is engaged throughout, in ways that render him a guiding light even when I have steered away from the paths he illuminated; not even Hans Baron who, whatever his overstatements, established Leonardo Bruni and Niccolo Machiavelli in the crucial roles I have continued to accord them. I therefore simply mention his name at this point, together with that of Ronald Syme, another great figure of a past generation, whose interpretation of Tacitus casts a dazzling light on Gibbon's understanding of the same figure. Among historians yet living, and even of age-groups that will succeed my own, I should like to mention Peter Miller for his incomparable depiction of *Peiresc's Europe*, while the debt of all Gibbonian scholars to David Womersley is not only inexhaustible but increasing.

The institutions whose help I acknowledged in presenting my former volumes have continued, directly and indirectly, to contribute to the making of this one. Many of the chapters that follow were typed in a former draft by David Mene; others by Ellen Pearson and Catherine Cardno; the final typescript was predominantly the work of Jason Kuznicki, with late revisions by Caleb McDaniel. I should like to thank them all, and the History Department of the Johns Hopkins University for supporting their work. My thanks go also to many colleagues, at Johns Hopkins and elsewhere, who have helped me by conversation and comment: in particular, Thomas Izbicki, Richard Kagan, Peter Miller, Orest Ranum, Melvin Richter, Matthew Roller, Teofilo Ruiz, Quentin Skinner, Gabrielle Spiegel, and James Tully. They are not to blame for any errors that have survived the scrutiny they encouraged me to undertake.

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Thanks also to the anonymous readers for the Cambridge University Press, and above all to Richard Fisher, who have surpassed the generosity and patience they accorded to the preceding volumes of *Barbarism and Religion*.

Felicity Pocock again read the whole thing aloud for the correction of proofs. This volume is presented to our grand children, Charlotte, Henry and Rowan, who were born while it was in the making.



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I have not attempted in this volume the earlier practise of supplying eighteenth-century English translations of quoted texts. The translations given are those of modern editors, with the exception of two cases where they were written *circa* 1600 and two where I have been obliged to supply my own. Matthew Roller helped with these, but responsibility for them is my own. In transcribing languages other than English, I have followed the typographic conventions of the editions I use. This has entailed differences both between ancient and modern editions, and between the conventions preferred by modern editors. The bibliography at the end of the volume contains a separate section for modern editions and translations. The *Decline and Fall* (*DF*) is cited by volume, chapter and footnotes; all page references are to the edition by David Womersley.

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The following abbreviations are used throughout the volume. Those in separate chapters are listed in the bibliography.

<i>EE</i>	Patricia B. Craddock (ed.), <i>The English Essays of Edward Gibbon</i> . Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1972
<i>EEG</i>	J. G. A. Pocock, <i>Barbarism and Religion. Volume I: The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999
<i>EGLH</i>	Patricia B. Craddock, <i>Edward Gibbon: Luminous Historian, 1772–1794</i> . Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989
<i>Letters</i>	J. E. Norton (ed.), <i>The Letters of Edward Gibbon</i> . In three volumes. London: Cassell and Company, 1956
<i>Library</i>	Geoffrey Keynes (ed.), <i>The Library of Edward Gibbon</i> . Second edition. N.P.: St Paul's Bibliographies, 1980
<i>Memoirs</i>	Georges A. Bonnard (ed.), <i>Edward Gibbon: Memoirs of My Life</i> . New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1969
<i>MGH, xx</i>	G. H. Pertz (ed.), <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptorum Tomus XX</i> . Hanover, <i>impensis bibliopoli aulici Hahniani</i> , 1868.
<i>MW</i>	Lord Sheffield (ed.), <i>The Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon, Esq. With Memoirs of his Life and Writings, Composed by Himself: Illustrated from his Letters, with Occasional Notes and Narrative. A new edition, with considerable additions, in five volumes</i> . London, John Murray, 1814.

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- NCG* J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion. Volume II: Narratives of Civil Government*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999
- Womersley, 1994 David Womersley (ed.), *Edward Gibbon: The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. In three volumes. London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1994
- YEG* Patricia B. Craddock, *Young Edward Gibbon, Gentleman of Letters*. Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982